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United for Quality Care

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SEIU 1199NE

Before the Human Services Committee

***In Support of SB 989 An Act Concerning Nursing Homes***

Good Afternoon Senator Lesser, Senator Hochadel, Representative Gilchrest, Representative Garibay, and Members of the Committee. My name is Lisa Emmer, and I am a Certified Nurse's Aide. I have been working as a CNA in Colchester for 15 years. I come before you today in support of improving staffing standards in nursing homes.

I really enjoy my work and the relationships I build with my residents. This line of work is the backbone of the industry, as we provide the most essential and personal care of residents daily. The workload is extremely heavy. We have no staff! CNAs are doing double the work assignments with no compensation. We do not receive extra pay for working short staffed. I may be older, but I show up. I continue to show up, not knowing who else will show up. There are so many nights that I am alone to care for 20 residents.

After I worked my 8 hours alone to care for 20 residents, I am then told that I have to stay for another 8 hour shift. I am beat, tired, and held hostage. Mandating happens on a regular basis and is not fair to those of us who show up. We are burnt out - physically, mentally, and emotionally. We are not compensated and threatened to be disciplined if we cannot stay or fall asleep while on break. How is that fair? If you do not prepare to work doubles, fatigue kicks in. The next day, my body is sore, and I have difficulty sleeping, become restless and too tired to even do the most basic of my own personal tasks. We have our own medical and health problems to deal with, but on the rare occasion we aren't working we are too tired to take care of ourselves.

Short staffing also means that residents are not given quality end of life care. We should be seeing residents 4 or more times a shift. We have incontinent residents, we have other residents who we must help reposition. If we are lucky we will see them twice in an eight hour shift, that is not fair to them. Short staffing is causing residents to have an increase in dehydration, malnutrition, skin break down, falling, and even death. Imagine delivering dinner trays, walking into a room, and finding someone unexpectedly deceased.

Something needs to be done. We all have a common goal of giving our residents the best quality care. The State provides these nursing home companies with the funds to do so, but does not hold them accountable when they do not. We cannot continue on like this. No one is coming to work in nursing homes. When new hires do show up, they often don't return because the short

staffing makes this work unsustainable. I am 69 years old, old enough to have retired four years ago, but I cannot afford to retire and live in this state. If something is not done, there will be no staff left to care for our residents. Please pass SB 989.

Thank you.